



What is Public School Open Enrollment?

Wisconsin's inter-district public school open enrollment program allows parents to apply for their children to attend school districts other than the one in which they live.

Who may participate?

Students in 5-year-old kindergarten to grade 12 may apply to participate in open enrollment.

Children entering prekindergarten, 4-year-old kindergarten and early childhood education may participate only if the child's resident school district offers the same type of program and only if the child is eligible for the program in the resident school district. Parents should call their resident school district administrator to find out if their preschool-aged child qualifies.

How and when may parents apply?

Parents must submit application forms to the non-resident district during a three week period in February.

For the 2006-07 school year, parents must apply no earlier than Feb. 6 and no later than Feb. 24, 2006. Late applications will not be accepted for any reason. A student may apply to no more than three nonresident school districts.

Application forms may be obtained (after December 15, 2005) from the Department of Public Instruction (the address is on the back of this brochure) or from any school district.

Can an application be rejected?

Under certain circumstances, nonresident school districts may deny an open enrollment application. These are:

- If space is not available for the student in the nonresident school district.
- If the special education program the student needs is not available in the nonresident school district or if space is not available in the special education the student needs.
- If the student has been referred for a special education evaluation, but has not yet been evaluated.
- If the student has been expelled during the current school year or during the preceding two school years for certain violent conduct.

What if more students apply to attend than there are spaces?

If more students apply to attend the nonresident school district than there are spaces, the nonresident school district must give preference to students who are already attending public school in that district and to siblings of students already attending the district. After granting these preferences, students assigned to any remaining spaces must be selected randomly.

If the student is denied, will the student be placed on a waiting list?

Some school districts have waiting lists, other school districts do not have them. If the nonresident district has a waiting list, the notice of denial will indicate the student's place on the waiting list.

Can a resident district prevent students from leaving?

A resident district may prevent a student who needs special education from leaving the district if the tuition charge for the student's special education in the nonresident district creates an undue financial burden for the resident district.

If you have further questions about open enrollment for students with disabilities, contact the resident or nonresident district or the DPI.

May parents appeal if their application is denied?

Parents whose applications are denied may appeal to the DPI within 30 days after the denial notice is mailed or delivered to the parent, whichever is sooner. Late appeals cannot be accepted. The statutes require the DPI to uphold a school district's decision unless it was arbitrary or unreasonable. The DPI's decision may be appealed to circuit court.

Must students reapply every year?

Once a student is accepted into the nonresident school district, the student may continue to attend without annual reapplication, except:

- The nonresident district may require each student to reapply only one time—at the beginning of middle school, junior high or high school.
- Under certain circumstances, a student who needs special education may be required to return to the student's resident school district.

A student who is attending a nonresident school district under open enrollment may return to her or his resident school district at any time. However, once the student returns to the resident district, the student may not go back to the nonresident district unless the student reapplies during the February application period. (Students should be aware that returning to the resident school district may affect their eligibility for inter-scholastic athletics.)



Is there a cost to parents for participation in open enrollment?

There is no tuition cost to parents for participation in open enrollment. Parents of open-enrolled students may be charged the same fees as resident students.

Who is responsible for providing transportation to open enrolled students?

Parents are responsible for transporting their children to and from school. However, if the individualized education program for a student with a disability requires transportation, it must be provided by the nonresident school district.

Both resident and nonresident districts *may* provide some transportation, however, *nonresident districts are prohibited from picking up or dropping off students within the boundaries of the student's resident district.*

Low-income parents (eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the federal school lunch program) may apply to the DPI for reimbursement of a portion of their transportation costs. There is a space on the application form to do this.

Are there special rules that apply to Chapter 220 school districts?

School districts that participate in the state's desegregation program (called Chapter 220) are required to deny any transfer into or out of the school district if that transfer would increase racial imbalance in the school district. School districts that participate in Chapter 220 are Milwaukee and many of its suburbs, Madison, Beloit, Racine and Wausau.

Does the open enrollment program allow a parent to select a specific school in the student's resident district?

No. It is up to each school board to assign students to schools within the district, and to decide whether or not to allow intra-district transfers.

Open enrolled students have the same rights and responsibilities as resident students. For inter-scholastic athletics, this means that participation in sports is governed by the rules of the WIAA.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT

February 6-24, 2006 – Parents must apply to the nonresident district. Late applications will not be accepted for any reason.

April 7, 2006 – School district notices of approval or denial must be postmarked by this date. Parents may appeal the denial within 30 days.

May 12, 2006 – By this date, school districts must notify parents of accepted applicants of the school to which the student is assigned.

June 9, 2006 – Parents of accepted applicants must notify nonresident districts whether the student will open enroll in the 2006-07 school year. If the parent fails to make this notification, the student may not participate in open enrollment.

For more information, contact:

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2006-07 SCHOOL YEAR

Full-Time Inter-District OPEN ENROLLMENT In Wisconsin Public Schools

(information for parents)

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent